

The distribution of the races of *Bradornis pallidus* (V. Muller) in Southern Africa with the description of a new race

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As a result of a recent study of geographical variation in the South African subcontinental populations of the Pale Flycatcher *Bradornis pallidus* (von Muller) based on the series of this species in the collections of the National Museum of Southern Rhodesia, Bulawayo, and the Durban Museum, it has been ascertained that the present subspecific arrangement of the populations in the standard literature is unsatisfactory and in need of revision. For the loan of material from the interior of southern Africa I am indebted to Mr. M. P. Stuart Irwin, Zoological Assistant of the National Museum of Southern Rhodesia, and to Dr. Austin L. Rand, Chief Curator of Zoology, Chicago Natural History Museum, I am grateful for comparing and identifying specimens submitted to him.




Three races are currently accepted as occurring in southern Africa, these being *B. p. subalaris* Sharpe, 1873: Mombasa, Kenya Colony, which is asserted to range from Natal, Zululand, eastern Transvaal and Portuguese East Africa northwards in the eastern lowlands; *B. p. murinus* Finsch & Hartlaub, 1870: Caconda, Angola, with its stated range as Angola, Bechuanaland, Ovamboland and Southern Rhodesia northwards, while *B. p. aquaemontis* Stresemann, 1937: Waterberg Plateau, South-West Africa, is reputedly confined to the Waterberg Range of north-eastern South-West Africa.

B. p. subalaris is found to be a very small race confined to the eastern tropical littoral and probably does not come within the limits of subcontinental southern Africa. The wing-measurements of specimens of this race from coastal Kenya Colony in the collection of the Durban Museum are ♂♂ 82.0–84.5 (83.1) and ♀♀ 79.5–81.0 (80.0), which are considerably smaller than any of the many south-eastern African birds measured by me. The populations of Natal, Zululand, southern Swaziland, the eastern Transvaal and extreme southern Sul do Save usually incorrectly placed as *B. p. subalaris*, are now found to be inseparable from the brown-backed *B. p. murinus* of Angola, the identification being kindly confirmed by Dr. Austin L. Rand, who compared material from the area concerned with samples of the Angola populations. In the course of this study the south-eastern birds were compared in the Durban Museum with others from eastern Southern Rhodesia and a single specimen from Angola, with which they were found to agree in all subspecific characters. The range of *B. p. murinus* has now been determined as from central and northern Angola, the southern Congo, the North-Western, Western, Northern and Southern districts of Northern Rhodesia,? Nyasaland, Southern Rhodesia, except for Matabeleland, south to the eastern Transvaal, southern Swaziland, the extreme southern part of Mozambique, Zululand and Natal (rare). The wing and tail measurements of specimens of *B. p. murinus* as measured by me are 10 ♂♂ wing 89.0–98.0 (94.6), tail 69.0–80.5 (74.4), 10 ♀♀ wing 83.0–91.0 (87.2), tail 62.0–69.0 (66.8) mm. The specimens from Natal, Zululand, southern Swaziland and the eastern Transvaal average smaller in size, but are not subspecifically distinct.

B. p. aquaemontis, based on specimens from the Waterberg, South-West Africa, is a large pale race, differing from *B. p. murinus* in size and in the grey upper-parts, which are about 00S-8-2° (vide Villalobos, *Colour Atlas*, 1947) as opposed to a reading of 00S-6-3° in *B. p. murinus*, which is distinctly darker and browner in comparison. Chapin (*Birds of the Belgian Congo*, part iii, p. 613, 1953) suggested that *B. p. aquaemontis* may



Figure 1. Sketch Map to show the distributions of the races of *Bradornis pallidus* in Southern Africa.

-  *B. p. murinus* Finsch & Hartlaub
-  *B. p. aquaemontis* Stresemann
-  *B. p. divisus mihi*

extend to Balovale on the upper Zambesi River, and this supposition is probably correct. Specimens examined from the northern Bechuanaland Protectorate and Matabeleland are now found to be referable to this large grey race, thus extending its distribution far to the east of its previously restricted range in the Waterberg. The populations of Barotseland, Northern Rhodesia, placed as *B. p. murinus* by Benson & White (*Check List of the Birds of Northern Rhodesia*, 1957) probably belong to this race as well. The wing and tail measurements of *B. p. aquaemontis* are 11 ♂♂ wing 96.0-102.5 (98.6), tail 72.5-81.5 (75.5); 5 ♀♀ wing 88.0-90.5 (89.2),

tail 66.5–70.0 (68.2). The established range of this form is from northern South-West Africa and adjacent southern Angola, eastwards through the northern Bechuanaland Protectorate, to Matabeleland, Southern Rhodesia, and probably parts of the western Transvaal and Barotseland, Northern Rhodesia.

During the course of a recent collecting trip organised by the Durban Museum to southern Portuguese East Africa (August, September, 1960) it was ascertained that in the lower reaches of the Limpopo River occurs a grey form of *Bradornis pallidus*, inseparable from *B. p. aquaemontis* in colouration, but of considerably smaller proportions. This small grey form appears to be restricted to the lower reaches of the Limpopo River Valley, specimens having been examined from Beit Bridge, Southern Rhodesia, and from Panda near Inhambane, Chimonzo in the Macia district, and Manhica, southern Mozambique. It appears as if this small-sized, grey coloured innominate race of the middle and lower Limpopo River Valley is interposed and completely divides the populations of *B. p. murinus* into two blocks, north and south of the watercourse concerned. This eastern grey form, while similar to *B. p. aquaemontis* in colouration, is considerably smaller in size, and though localised in its distribution is sufficiently distinct to deserve nomenclatural recognition, and for it I propose the name

Bradornis pallidus divisus, subsp. nov.

Type: ♂ ad. Panda, near Inhambane, Sul do Save, southern Mozambique. Collected 10th September, 1960 by the Durban Museum Expedition. In the collection of the Durban Museum.

Diagnosis: Similar to *B. p. aquaemontis* in colouration of head-top, nape and mantle, but distinctly smaller in size, thus, wings of ♂♂ 91.5–95.0 (92.7), ♀♀ 84.5–85.5 (85.0) mm. as against ♂♂ 96.0–102.5 (98.6), ♀♀ 88.0–90.5 (89.2) mm. in *B. p. aquaemontis*, and tails ♂♂ 67.5–76.0 (69.7), ♀♀ 65.0–65.5 (65.2) as against ♂♂ 72.5–81.5 (75.5), ♀♀ 66.5–70.0 (68.2) mm. in *B. p. aquaemontis*. Differs from *B. p. murinus* in having the upper-parts grey and not brown, and lacking the buffish suffusion to the ventral surface.

Material examined: *B. p. divisus*: Southern Rhodesia 3, southern Mozambique 10, *B. p. aquaemontis*: Bechuanaland Protectorate 1, Matabeleland, Southern Rhodesia 22, *B. p. murinus*: Angola 1, Southern Rhodesia 17, eastern Transvaal 5, southern Swaziland 7, southern Mozambique 11, northern Zululand 2.

Measurements of Type: wing 94.0, tail 76.0, culmen 18.0 mm.

Range: Lower reaches of the Limpopo River from about Beit Bridge to Sul do Save, southern Mozambique. In the littoral from about Panda, near Inhambane, north of the Limpopo River, to Chimonzo near Macia, and Manhica, south of the Limpopo River. A single specimen from Bela Vista, in the Maputo district, seems to belong to this small-sized grey race, but other specimens from the same place are referable to the larger, brown *B. p. murinus*.

Remarks: This subspecies divides the populations of *B. p. murinus* into two blocks, one north and one south of the Limpopo River Valley, and from this fact derives its name.